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USDA'S REPORT TO CONSUMERS

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CONSUMER OUTLOOK - FROM REPORTS ISSUED AT THE 45th ANNUAL AGRICULTURAL OUTLOOK CONFERENCE

Food Price Picture. 1967 is closing out with prices for food at retail food stores averaging about the same as 1966. But, restaurant food prices are running about five percent above 1966, U. S. Department of Agriculture economists reported at the 45th Annual Agricultural Outlook Conference held in Washington, D. C. last month. In total, retail food prices in 1967 are averaging about one percent above a year earlier. Nonfood consumer prices, including services, are about three percent higher.

1968 Food Prospects. Demand for food is expected to continue upward in 1968, but supplies are expected to stay at about this year's level. As a result, prices to farmers for food products may increase. Retail prices may also reflect anticipated higher marketing costs. Thus, retail food prices in 1968 are likely to increase more than they have this year.

The Big Picture. Americans are expected to spend a total of \$96½ billion for food in 1967, an increase of more than \$3 billion over 1966. We'll be buying about the same quantity--or volume--of food in 1968, but food expenditures--or total amount of money we spend--will be larger mostly because of higher prices.

Income Gains Outpace Food Expenditures. A rise of about seven percent in consumer income in 1967 is overshadowing about a four percent increase in food expenditures. As a result, the percentage of income spent for food is declining from 18.3 percent in 1966 to about 17.7 in 1967. Consumer incomes and food expenditures both are expected to continue expanding in 1968. But, the average percentage of income spent for food in 1968 is likely to remain about the same as this year.



Consumer Goods and Services. Prices of consumer goods will rise at a faster pace in 1968 than in the past two years, noted economists at the 45th National Agricultural Outlook Conference held by the U. S. Department of Agriculture. Higher marketing costs will up price tags for furniture and tires. New and used car prices will rise along with appliances, radios and television sets. Clothing is likely to cost more, too. Service costs will continue upward, but at about their '67 rates. On the upswing will be mortgage interest costs; medical care; personal care and household services.

THE NEW YEAR MENU

Main Course-Meat and Poultry. The amount of food we are likely to eat in 1968--on a per person basis-- will show little change from 1967, predict U. S. Department of Agriculture specialists. Based on supply estimates, we'll eat about the same amount of beef, pork, and potatoes. Chicken will be on the menu more often, while turkey and eggs will likely be less plentiful over the course of the year. (They were in record supply in 1967.) Expect less veal and lamb, as well.

Fruit for Dessert? Supplies of fruit this winter are expected to be smaller. Higher prices are likely for most items, both fresh and processed. A smaller citrus crop is in prospect.

Dairy Products. During 1967, consumption of fluid milk and most dairy products dropped significantly below the previous year. The drop is a result of higher retail prices, and a continuing decline in demand. For 1968, little further decline is expected.

FOOD FACTS

Food Away From Home. Approximately \$30 billion is spent eating away from home, the U. S. Department of Agriculture notes. The total consumer bill for purchased meals (including alcoholic beverages) has risen at a faster rate than the population has grown. Expenditures for meals away from home in 1965 was highest in the Northeast and the West and lowest in the South. City families spent the most for snacks, farm families the least. Westerners spend the highest proportion in restaurants.

December Plentiful Foods. Turkey, the favorite for holiday dinners, is in plentiful supply, according to the U. S. Department of Agriculture. In a variety of sizes too; from the 8 to 10 pounders to jumbo turkeys, over 22 pounds. Broiler-fryers are in abundance too, and with egg production up, egg prices will also be lower. Other plentiful foods are oranges, grapefruit, grape juice and cabbage.

January 1968 Plentifuls - Feature: Broiler-fryers. Other plentifuls: Potatoes, grape juice, fresh oranges, fresh grapefruit, dry split peas, and eggs.

Shift for Convenience? As incomes rise, more families probably will continue to shift more and more to convenience foods according to a U. S. Department of Agriculture economist. Significantly, low income families tended in the past decade to change their food spending habits, leaning more towards convenience foods than did higher income households. Because of more types of convenience foods becoming available, the decisions of quality and cost will be more complex. More consumer education to stress the added cost of conveniences against time saved in the kitchen will be even more necessary than in the past, it was noted.

WORLD FOOD PROBLEM

Farmers Can Produce Enough. Will the world run out of food? There's little danger, according to a U. S. Department of Agriculture study. Looking ahead through 1980, the study contends that farmers in developed countries like the United States, Australia and Canada, will be able to produce enough to more than meet foreseeable world needs. However, the critical point comes back to how fast and how well the hungry nations can develop their own food-producing abilities. The U. S. will step up its food and technical assistance programs, where necessary, to help these nations achieve self-sufficiency and become cash customers in the world marketplace, note specialists.

SYMPOSIUM PLANNED

Symposium on Communities of Tomorrow. Where are we headed--where do we want to go? A symposium on how to provide living space for 100 million more Americans by the year 2000 and end urban overcrowding and rural decline will be held at the Department of State on Dec.11-12. The symposium, by invitation only, is being co-sponsored by six members of President Johnson's Cabinet: Secretaries Alexander B. Trowbridge of Commerce; W. Willard Wirtz of Labor; John W. Gardner of Health, Education, and Welfare; Robert C. Weaver of Housing Urban Development; Alan S. Boyd of Transportation; and Orville L. Freeman of Agriculture. The population exodus from countryside to city, its impact on people and our economy, man's future needs for living space and how life can be improved in big cities and small towns, will be reviewed by noted authorities.

WINTER RECREATION

Ski Slopes Are Lands of Many Uses. They produce trees, serve as watersheds, and may provide grazing for livestock and big game. Recreational skiing is harmonious with multiple land use. The snow cover yields moisture for next season's crops. Access roads serve both skiers and those who harvest the timber. And the ski lifts carry the summer visitor as well as winter vacationer to the "top of the world" for panoramic views. (From OUTDOORS, USA--The Year-book of Agriculture, 1967)

Ski the National Forests. The National Forests offer some of the best skiing in the country. Over 200 ski areas, including more than 80 percent of the major ski areas in the West, are located entirely or partially on National Forest land. These winter playgrounds are operated under forest-use permits and meet well-designed and carefully managed safety requirements. Safety is a basic consideration of the U. S. Department of Agriculture in administering the ski areas. Many groups cooperate with the Department's Forest Service in providing safety training and development for skiers of all ages and abilities. Some skiing tips:

- * Make sure all your equipment is in good condition and adequate for you.
- * Use your safety straps.
- * Find out the proper way to carry your equipment. Never ski a hill you aren't ready to handle. Proper instructions will help you to enjoy it.
- * Learn how to use tows and lifts properly. Loose clothing or long hair, unless properly worn, can entangle you with the tow or lift. Keep ski tips up when getting on or off chair lift. Make certain that nothing will catch when you get off a tow. Learn how to fall properly.
- * If you fall, get up immediately and go the side of the slope to make any necessary adjustments. If you make a "sitzmark" (hole in the snow), fill it up so the next skier won't trip on it. Don't swing poles above your waist.

For additional information on skiing in the national forests, write for the color-illustrated booklet "Skiing," PA 525, from the Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C. 20402. Price: 30 cents. Please include your zip code.

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